

WISHA REGIONAL DIRECTIVE

WISHA Services

Department of Labor and Industries

20.75 TREE & SHRUB TRIMMING, PRUNING, REMOVAL, ETC.

Date: May 2, 2001

I. Background

Tree and shrub trimming, pruning, bracing, removal and surgery involve specific risks of injury. In the State of Washington from 1994 through 1998, there were 1,261 injuries within the arborists standard industrial classification (SIC) code (SIC 0783). With roughly 7 million work hours reported during this time frame, the injury rate approaches 130 per thousand workers.

However, there is no single, specific set of safety and health standards that applies to this activity, which has generated questions about applicable regulations. This directive was developed in response to recommendations from industry and WISHA staff to give direction on how compliance can be achieved and evaluated using existing safety and health standards.

II. Scope and Application

This WISHA Regional Directive (WRD), which will remain in effect indefinitely, provides guidance for WISHA enforcement and consultation staff evaluating possible violations relating to tree and shrub trimming, pruning, bracing, removal, and surgery when no industry-specific standard applies. It replaces all previous guidance on this subject, whether formal or informal

III. Interpretive Guidance

A. What standards apply to tree and shrub trimming, pruning, bracing, removal and surgery?

Certain standards apply depending upon the nature of the underlying activity (for example, Chapter 296-54 WAC addresses logging, Chapter 296-45 WAC addresses work near high voltage lines by qualified workers, and Chapter 296-307 WAC addresses agricultural activity). However, for those employers specializing in this work, whose activities typically do not fall within a industry-specific standard, hazards must be addressed by relying upon the applicable portions of the general safety standard (Chapter 296-24 WAC) and the general occupational health standard (Chapter 296-62 WAC), as well as the WISHA Core Rules (Chapter 296-800 WAC) when they take effect in August of 2001.

Certain hazards unique to this activity must be addressed using WAC 296-24-073, the Safe Place Standard (will become WAC 296-800-110 in August of 2001). The applicable industry consensus code, ANSI Z133.1, provides appropriate guidance regarding industry practice and can be relied upon in evaluating a potential “safe place” violation.

B. Which standard applies when work involves both activity covered by the logging standard and activity that appears to fall outside the industry-specific standard?

In cases not involving removal of trees, the logging standard clearly does not apply and the applicable portions of Chapter 296-24 WAC will govern the activity, including safe place enforcement based upon ANSI Z133.1. In cases involving the removal of trees, WISHA will rely upon the underlying purpose to determine whether the logging standard applies. In other words, if the purpose is beautification and marketing of the logs or log portions is secondary, the logging standard does not apply. Even if the logging standard does apply, guidance related to “piecing out” trees (which is not addressed by the logging standard) would be found in ANSI Z133.1 and enforced using the applicable safe place standard.

C. When would the construction standard apply?

The construction standard applies whenever the work falls under the scope of the construction standard. This might involve the entire activity (for example, land clearing preparatory to construction activity) or it might involve a portion of the activity (for example, removal of a sidewalk or a bulkhead in order to extract a stump or the root portion of a tree). However, because WAC 296-155-625(1)(a) directs employers to comply with the logging standard during land clearing, clearing would be addressed as described in “B” above. Other construction activity would be addressed in accordance with the applicable language in the construction standard.

D. When would the high voltage electrical standard apply?

Chapter 296-45 WAC, Safety Standards for Electrical Workers, would apply only if the definition of a “line clearance tree trimmer” is met. Otherwise, work near high-voltage lines would be addressed through the general electrical requirements or by relying upon the applicable safe place standard and ANSI.

Approved: _____

Michael Wood

Senior Program Manager, WISHA Policy & Technical Services

For further information about this or other WISHA Regional Directives, you may contact WISHA Policy & Technical Services at P.O. Box 44648, Olympia, WA 98504-4648 -- or by telephone at (360)902-5503. You also may review policy information on the WISHA Website (<http://www.wa.gov/lni/wisha>).